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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2002

THIS REPORT WILL PRESENT A TURKISH PRESS SUMMARY UNDER THREE
THEMES:

HEADLINES
BRIEFING
EDITORIAL OPINION

HEADLINES

MASS APPEALS

Fears for new biological attack in the US - Turkiye
Erdogan Wants Broad Coalition for Iraq Operation - Milliyet
PM Gul: We did not discuss 60,000 troops with the US - Sabah
FM Yakis' "invasion" remarks appears on Athens' agenda -
Hurriyet

OPINION MAKERS

Foreign Policy Summit at the Presidential Palace -
Cumhuriyet
Cyprus Summit at Cankaya - Radikal
PM Gul: Cyprus is our national issue - Yeni Safak
EU deadline for solving Cyprus issue by February 28 creates
tension in Ankara - Zaman

BRIEFING

Iraq: "Milliyet" highlights AKP leader Erdogan's statement that Arab countries, including Syria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia should take part in a possible operation against Iraq. Erdogan said that such an operation could not be realized without a coalition. Erdogan added that PM Gul will be traveling to the Middle East soon to seek support from Arab countries. "Hurriyet" reports the same news under the headline 'Middle East trip for Saddam,' and states that AKP leader Erdogan will travel to the region this month to seek support. Citing the US media, "Hurriyet" also reports that the Pentagon plans to launch an international public relations campaign, which will include bribing some journalists to print pro-American stories. "Sabah" reports that PM Gul denied reports that the US has delivered 50 truck-loads of military equipment to Iraq. Gul confirms claims that DepSecDef Wolfowitz and U/S Grossman had presented US demands to Turkey during their recent visit. However, the PM stressed that Turkey has not yet responded to these requests. "Milliyet" reports that Turkey has deployed nearly 40,000 troops along the Iraqi border in preparation for a possible operation. These troops could be increased in line with developments. "Yeni Safak" reports that Turkey would play a limited role in a possible war against Iraq, because the US is afraid of a possible clash between Turks and Kurds.

Cyprus: "Cumhuriyet" reports on the heated argument between CHP leader Baykal and FM Yakis in parliament yesterday over the FM's statement that 'Turkish troops would become occupiers of EU territory if the UN Cyprus plan is rejected.' There are rumors that Yakis will be given a new assignment when Erdogan becomes Prime Minister and Gul is moved to Foreign Minister. "Sabah" reports that the Greek Cypriots have launched a peace campaign in support of Annan's Cyprus plan. The goal of the Greek Cypriots is to ensure Turkish support for the plan, thus securing EU entry of a United Cyprus. All papers report that there will be a summit at the Presidential Palace today to discuss Turkey's foreign policy. President Sezer will chair the meeting, which will also include PM Gul, FM Yakis, Chief of General Staff Ozkok, and Foreign Ministry U/S Ziyal. After this meeting, there will be a second meeting with the participation of TRNC president Denktas to discuss the Cyprus issue in more detail.

"The US war plan"
Editor-in-Chief of the tabloid "Star," Fatih Cekirge, claimed (12/18): "Two weeks ago, the Turkish Ambassador to Washington was summoned to the State Department. During the meeting he was officially notified about the US war plan for Iraq and was presented with a list of US demands from Turkey. The plan includes the use of Turkish airbases as well as Turkish territory. The capacity of the airbases will be expanded for the use of the American air force, and US grounds troops will launch a military operation from Turkish soil into northern Iraq. . The meeting in Ankara at the presidential palace today is to make a crucial decision about this plan. Ankara feels uneasy about it, yet the message from Washington is clear enough: Ankara must support the plan in exchange for Washington's recent support for Turkey's EU membership accession. We will see if the AKP government will push for a `yes' to the plan, thereby putting Turkey into very big trouble."

"An Iraq operation and the economy"
Fatih Altayli argued in mass appeal Hurriyet (12/18): "Sooner or later there is going to be a military operation against Iraq. This is not going to happen because of weapons of mass destruction or terrorism, but because the US economy is in need of it. The future of the US economy depends on an operation. US economic figures are not very encouraging at the moment, with ongoing stagflation, lots of bankrupt firms, a large number of unemployed and so on. . It seems that the hope for a better economic future for America goes through a military strike against Iraq."

PEARSON